



MAY 13 2009

The Honorable Michael J. Copps
Acting Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Copps:

We are writing to request that 1-800-SUICIDE be permanently reassigned to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

SAMHSA provides a stable source of funding for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline), a telephone counseling network linking over 135 suicide prevention hotlines nationwide through a system of toll free numbers. The Lifeline network (1-800-273-TALK), which is operated by a SAMHSA grantee, currently answers over 48,700 calls monthly.

Among the services offered is the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline, launched in July 2007 by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and HHS. Veterans who call the Lifeline and "press 1" are directly connected to the VA's suicide prevention services. Approximately 8,600 callers press 1 for VA services each month.

After the temporary assignment by the FCC of 1-800-SUICIDE to SAMHSA in January 2007, SAMHSA integrated calls to that number into the Lifeline network. Approximately 19,300 calls per month, including 2,200 VA calls per month, currently enter the Lifeline network through 1-800-SUICIDE. If 1-800-SUICIDE does not remain with SAMHSA as part of the Lifeline network, the safety of those callers seeking veterans services and using 1-800-SUICIDE could be jeopardized.

HHS and the VA seek permanent reassignment to SAMHSA of 1-800-SUICIDE so that we can continue providing our Nation's citizens including our veterans the consistent high quality of service they deserve.

Sincerely,

General Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of
Veterans Affairs

Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
Department of
Health and Human Services